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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND HEALTH MINISTER DISCUSS NARCOTICS,
TIP, HIV/AIDS AND ROMA

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1. (U) Summary: During Ambassador's February 7 introductory call on Health and Welfare Minister Nikitas Kaklamanis, the Minister requested U.S. assistance in the form of training and consultations with USG experts to combat narcotics and alcohol addiction. On trafficking in persons (TIP), Ambassador received assurances on continued cooperation with NGOs and a MOH commitment to study the magnitude of the problem. Kaklamanis agreed that while his ministry has the tools to fight HIV/AIDS, the subject remains somewhat taboo in Greek society. End Summary.

GoG Requests Training to Fight Narcotics Addiction

2. (U) Warmly welcoming Ambassador to his office, Kaklamanis mentioned the constructive past collaboration between his ministry and the Embassy. First on his agenda was a request for assistance in Greece's "fight against narcotics." Kaklamanis mentioned training specifically, but then asked if it would be possible for Greek officials to go to the U.S. for consultations. He also noted that alcohol abuse was becoming a serious national problem among the teenage population and asked whether a U.S. project on alcoholism prevention might serve as a model for Greece. Ambassador mentioned the State Department's Voluntary Visitor program as a good mechanism for exposing Greek officials to U.S. practices on both subjects. Embassy's Pol and PD sections will follow-up.

Pushing on TIP

3. (SBU) Regarding trafficking in persons (TIP), for which the Ministry of Health (MOH) has key responsibilities, Ambassador congratulated Kaklamanis on opening shelters and launching a TIP hotline. Both agreed that the next critical step is victim screening and referral. However, Kaklamanis and his Secretary General who handles the TIP portfolio, Ioanna Despotopoulou, said the ministries of justice and public order are primarily responsible for the screening and referral functions. Ambassador urged continued TIP cooperation with NGOs, a primary responsibility of the MOH under Greece's National Action Plan to combat TIP. Despotopoulou suggested that corruption or political agendas of certain NGOs make them difficult partners, but she disclosed that her Ministry has excellent cooperation with other "key" NGOs in Athens, Thessaloniki, and Ioannina. Asked about greater unaccompanied NGO access to Amygdeleza Detention Center, where unidentified TIP victims may remain due to inadequate screening, Despotopoulou said certain cooperative NGOs have access in association with MOH staff, and others should request access through the MPO. As there are currently no reliable estimates of the number of TIP victims in Greece, Ambassador asked whether the Ministry had plans to undertake research into the magnitude of the TIP problem in order to track trends. Though Kaklamanis initially indicated no plans for such a study, Despotopoulou concluded that the Ministry could "for sure" complete one.

HIV/AIDS and Roma Issues Under Control

4. (U) Responding to Ambassador's query about the HIV/AIDS situation, Kaklamanis said his ministry has reliable statistics and capable staff to handle the problem. He added, however, that it remains "difficult to speak freely" in Greek society about the disease. Related to TIP, Kaklamanis agreed that HIV/AIDS risk from an unregulated sex industry is another important reason to control the trafficking phenomenon. Asked about health issues among minority groups, especially Roma, the Minister related that complete medical coverage is provided to Roma, and that an inoculation program for Roma children was recently completed in Athens and will start soon in Thrace. (Note: Post will check with Roma organizations to see how this free medical care policy and inoculation program have been implemented. End Note.)

5. (U) Comment: Greece's Organization for Combating

Narcotics (OKANA), which coordinates and manages treatment policy and demand reduction in Greece, has at least one U.S.-educated medical doctor on staff. Post officers will work with the MOH to refine the Minister's request for training and consultations, and to identify possible candidates for Voluntary Visitor programs. While additional U.S. training would be beneficial, raising public awareness is critically needed. On TIP, Minister Kaklamanis can point to some progress, but we will continue to raise the benchmarks at every opportunity and to encourage further cooperation between the GoG and anti-TIP NGOs. End Comment.
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